

Message Text

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SUBJ: JORGE OLAVARRIA AS COUNTERFOIL TO ARRIA-
POLITICAL HARDBALL IN VENEZUELA

REFS: A CARACAS 2333, B 77 CARACAS 12405

SUMMARY: "RESUMEN" EDITOR JORGE OLAVARRIA, MAY RETURN
SHORTLY FROM SELF-IMPOSED EXILE TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT ON
THE TICKET OF THE LATE RENNY OTTOLINA'S POLITICAL MOVEMENT.
POLITICAL OBSERVERS SEE IN OLAVARRIA'S POTENTIAL RETURN
A POLITICAL QUID PRO QUO. THE GOV WOULD ALLOW OLAVARRIA TO
SETTLE HIS LEGAL PROBLMES. HE, IN TURN, RUNNING AS AN
ECLECTIC INDEPENDENT, WOULD NOT ONLY DRAW VOTES AWAY
FROM ARRIA, BUT WOULD ALSO TARNISH HIS IMAGE. IF ALL OF
THIS HAPPENS, IT WILL BE A VIVID EXAMPLE OF BIG LEAGUE
VENEZUELAN POLITICAL HARDBALL. END SUMMARY.

1. THE RETURN OF A PRODIGAL SON.

THE CARACAS PRESS REPORTED THIS WEEK THAT SOME LEADERS
OF THE LATE RENNY OTTOLINA'S "NATIONAL INTEGRATION MOVEMENT"
(M) HAVE DECIDED TO BRING "RESUMEN" EDITOR JORGE
OLAVARRIA BACK TO VENEZUELA SOON TO HEAD THE MIN TICKET.
REGARDING THE ARREST WARRANT STILL OUTSTANDING AGAINST
OLAVARRIA(SEE REF A), MIN LEADERS TOLD THE PRESS THAT
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LEADING LAWYERS WOULD DEFEND HIM AND IN FACT, HIS CAUSE
WOULD EVEN BE HELPED IF HE WERE TO GO TO JAIL. THE MIN
HAS BEEN IN DISARRAY SINCE THE DEATH OF ITS FOUNDER AND
CANDIDATE OTTOLINA IN MARCH. SOME OF OTTOLINA'S SUPPORTERS
NOW BACK HIS DAUGHTER, RHONA, OTHERS WENT OVER TO DIEGO
ARRIA. OLAVARRIA, GIVEN THE PUBLICITY GENERATED BY HIS
CASE HERE, IS NOW WELL KNOWN AMONG LITERATE VENEZUELAN

AND WAS PERSONALLY AND POLITICALLY CLOSE TO OTTOLINA. THEREFORE, IT IS NOT ILLOGICAL FOR THE MIN TO BACK HIS CANDIDACY, A POINT THE MIN LEADERS MADE TO THE PRESS.

2. A QUID PRO QUO.

OLAVARRIA IS BRIGHT, INTENSE, GIVEN TO OBSESSIONS, INCONSISTENT, AND HAS A DEEP GRUDGE AGAINST BOTH PRESIDENT PEREZ AND HIS FORMER INFORMATION MINISTER AND NOW INDEPENDENT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, DIEGO ARRIA. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT OLAVARRIA (NOTWITHSTANDING MIN ASSERTIONS) WOULD COME BACK TO VENEZUELA ONLY WITH ASSURANCES THAT THE CASE AGAINST HIM COULD BE SETTLED, THUS AVOIDING JAIL. HIS PART OF THE BARGAIN WOULD BE TO RUN A VIGOROUS INDEPENDENT POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, USING OTTOLINA'S ORGANIZATION AND FINANCES. THIS WOULD, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, CUT INTO ARRIA'S POTENTIAL VOTE TOTAL. FURTHER, HOWEVER, OLAVARRIA WOULD, WITHOUT DOUBT, FO FOR ARRIA'S GROOM SEEKING REVENGE FOR ARRIA'S MALADROIT EFFORTS TO SMEAR HIM. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY HAS NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION, SEVERAL POLITICIANS BELIEVE THAT THIS PARTICULAR MANEUVER WAS HATCHED IN THE FERTILE MIND OF ROMULO BETANCOURT WHO HATES ARRIA'S OPPORTUNISM AND UNWILLINGNESS TO JOIN THE AD PARTY ACCEPTING ITS DISCIPLINE AND HIERARCHY.

3. COMMENT: SHOULD IT MATERIALIZE, THE "OLAVARRIA GAMBIT"
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WOULD BREATHE SOME BADLY NEEDED LIFE INTO THE MID-CAMPAIGN. IT ALSO WOULD DEMONSTRATE HOW THE TRADITIONAL PARTIES (AD IN THIS CASE) TREAT THREATENING RENEGADE INDEPENDENTS. CLEARLY AN OLAVARRIA CANDIDACY COULD ONLY HURT ARRIA SINCE IT WOULD ATTRACT SOME OF THE SAME INDEPENDENT VOTERS. FURTHER, . 9)-:-448-'S THIRST FOR REVENGE WOULD PROBABLY LEAD HIM TO USE AS MUCH DIRT AS AD WOULD GIVE HIM ON ARRIA'S PUBLIC LIFE, THUS TARNISHING HIS IMAGE. AD AND COPEI SOURCES HAVE TOLD US BOTH PARTIES HAD LOTS OF DIRT ON ARRIA'S ALLEGED CORRUPTION WHILE IN PUBLIC OFFICE. INCIDENTALLY, THIS WOULD ALSO ALLOW AD NOT TO SULLY ITSELF WITH MUD SLINGING AND EVEN TO AVOID MENTIONING ARRIA DURING THE REST OF THE CAMPAIGN. SOME POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE AD CANDIDATE PINERUA MADE A MISTAKE IN ATTACKING ARRIA RECENTLY BECAUSE IT TENDED TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE POPULAR PERCEPTION OF ARRIA'S VIABILITY AS A CANDIDATE. PEREZ REPORTEDLY TOLD ARRIA MANY MONTHS AGO THAT IF THE LATTER RAN AS AN INDEPENDENT THE AD PARTY WOULD GET EVEN ("PASAR LA FACTURA"). ARRIA WAS TOO AMBITIOUS TO LISTEN. IF OLAVARRIA RUNS AND USES THE TACTICS SUGGESTED ABOVE, IT WILL BE A VIVID EXAMPLE OF HOW THE TRADITIONAL VENEZUELAN POLITICAL

PARTIES DEAL WITH THOSE WHO SEEK TO UPSET THE SYSTEM.
LASTLY, IT REAFFIRMS THAT BETANCOURT IS STILL TOP WARLOCK
IN VENEZUELAN POLITICS.
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